



March 17, 2020

Mayor Kennedy Stewart and City Council
City of Vancouver
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC
V5Y 1V4

Dear Mayor Stewart and City Council:

Re: COVID19 and Municipal Support for Vancouver's Small Businesses Neighbourhoods

On behalf of the Vancouver BIA Partnership, we are writing to request your support to aid the survival of local small business owners and thousands of livelihoods during this pandemic crisis. We believe that the City can immediately provide some financial relief to the small business community, which will in turn help them to develop meaningful business continuity plans.

Small businesses right now are having to choose between laying off employees to ensure short term business survival, or staying open to a dwindling group of customers. They are focussed on ensuring that they have the financial reserves to cover their larger, less forgivable costs.

The City of Vancouver can help with this by announcing immediate financial relief measures such as;

1. Defer the payment date of the 2020 property taxes from July, to be payable in September or later.
2. Provide relief from business operating fees, such as patios and business licenses, by lowering costs and/or deferring payments. These fees are imminent.
3. Relaxation of bylaw and parking enforcement to remove obstacles from customers visiting small businesses. This will help to encourage food and prescription pick up.
4. Provide clear guidelines to ensure businesses follow best practices if they are remaining open.
5. Provide clear and careful wording of any announcements, advisories or orders regarding whether or not businesses can remain open. Your clear communications on this is paramount, and needs to cut through the confusion of what businesses "should do" vs what they "must do".
6. Development of a small business recovery plan to include grants to small business for operations
7. Co-funding and co-partnering with business associations on a public relations campaign targeted at Vancouverites to come back out and support neighbourhood restaurants and other small business in future.
8. Collaborative efforts among all levels of government, and advocacy for conducive small business policies that may be outside of the City's mandate. This includes deferral of the employer health tax, delaying of the increase of the minimum wage and increase of the provincial sales tax.

It is imperative that policies also consider commercial property owners, so that the commercial landlord can support their business tenant, and the business tenant can support their staff. Over 20,000 small businesses and their staff are at financial risk, and the above-noted measures are essential for the health and well-being of local communities.

The Vancouver BIA Partnership is a coalition of 22 BIAs in the City of Vancouver representing approximately 22,000 commercial businesses and property owners. Collectively, we champion healthy and vibrant commercial districts through various marketing, beautification, revitalization, safety and advocacy initiatives. As Canadians, and proud Vancouverites, we recognize that we are all in this together, and that together we can keep Vancouver and our communities strong and safe.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. O'Shea".

Annette O'Shea, Executive Director, Yaletown BIA

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Barile".

Michelle Barile, Executive Director, West Broadway BIA

On behalf of the Vancouver BIA Partnership